

EID SACRIFICE (Eid-ul-Adha) ABRHAHAM AND HIS SACRIFICE

Islam celebrates two great festivals annually, all over the world - Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha.

Eid-ul-Fitr, follows the month of Ramadan when the fast is broken.

Eid-ul-Adha is about 2 months later during the month of Zil-Hajj when an animal is sacrificed in commemoration of Abraham's sacrifice of his son.

Eid-ul-Adha according to Islamic teaching is a time for Muslims to learn the value of self-denial by making a sacrifice of something living to God. Most Muslim theologians will say that there is no link between this and Jesus sacrifice on the cross, or his death in place in place of ours. They would say that Abraham's great act of submission is an example of genuine surrender to God's will only.

We believe that Abraham's sacrifice had an underlying revelation to it.

How can we explain this to our Muslim friends?

Lets look at Abraham's life. Are there any links between the Quranic version and the biblical one?

Abraham's faith

When Abraham was 75 yrs old, God spoke to him and told him to leave his country and go to a new land God said, "I will make you a great nation and I will bless you" (Gen 12:1-3)

The Quran says the same "Lo I have appointed thee a leader for mankind" (Sura 2.124)

Abraham left his land but because he was old and Sarah barren, Abraham wondered if Eliezer of Damascus (His servant) would be his heir. God promised that it would be Abraham's own son who will be the heir. (Gen 15:4)

Abraham knew that it was not naturally possible for him to have a son because his wife was barren and he was too old. (Gen 18:11)

We could ask our friends why did Abraham believe God?

W could ask: - Was he just fatalistic? Did he just resign himself to the will of God?

No, Abraham is a great man of God. The father of all nations. (Rom 4:16-22)

He believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. (Gen15:6)

He did not waver in faith ... "but was strengthened and was fully persuaded that God had the power to do what He had promised." (Rom 4)

He knew that "Every word of God proves true" (Proverbs 30:5).

He knew that God would have to naturally intervene to make this happen. He was not just fatalistic. He was fully convinced and had thought things out thoroughly.

What of Ishmael then?

10 years after the promises had been given to Abraham. Sarah complained to him about being not being able to have children. Sarah suggested that her maid Hagar should give him children. Hagar got pregnant, through Abraham. Sarah became jealous and drove Hagar away into the wilderness. (Gen 16). Then The Lord commanded Hagar to return to Sarah. Ishmael (meaning God hears) was born.

Ishmael grew up. 13 years passed. Abraham thought that his descendants would come through Ishmael. But God spoke again, and promised Sarah a son. He promised that she would be the mother of all nations. (Gen 17:16) Later Isaac was born, when Abraham was about 100 years old.

The Quran also says that Abraham then Ishmael then Isaac were born. The revelation was given to them and then to Moses and then to Jesus. (Sura 2:136) But the revelation the Quran talks of is Islam.

What of Isaac?

God did not promise the birth of Ishmael to Abraham. He never announced Ishmael's birth as good news. He spoke of Isaac only, when he first promised a son. The Quran also agrees here, in many places. Only the birth of Isaac is foretold not Ishmael. The promise of the birth of Isaac is recorded "And we gave him the good news of Isaac-a prophet, one of the righteous" Sura 37:112).

We know that Isaac was born of the spirit of God.

As Isaac grew up, Ishmael got jealous of the blessings that Isaac had been promised (Gen 21:9) He wanted the blessings to go to him.

God warned Abraham that this would happen (Gen 21:10) Abraham had to send him away.

Abraham lived in the land of the Philistines until Isaac approached adulthood. Now he hoped his dreams would come true.

The command to sacrifice.

Was it Ishmael or Isaac that was sacrificed? Who had God given the promises to?

“Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Mariah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains that I shall tell you.” (Gen 22:2)

Ishmael had left Abraham and only Isaac was alone with him.

The Quran talks of this Sacrifice too:-

“When the son was old enough to walk with Abraham. Abraham said Oh my dear son I have seen in a vision that I must sacrifice you.” (Sura 37:100-102)

Although the Quran doesn't specifically mention Isaac by name here, it must mean Isaac, because he is the only son in the Quran to be announced and promised to Abraham. Ishmael is never blessed.

Muslim tradition say that this promise was to Ishmael “ however tradition is not unanimous on this” says the commentator Yusuf Ali.

To us it is obvious that even in the Quran the son to be sacrificed must be Isaac, in the same Sura 37 continues “And we gave him (Abraham) tidings of the birth of Isaac, a prophet of the righteous. And we blessed him and Isaac” (Sura 37.112)

Abraham must have been shocked to the core. “The sacrifice was demanded of both Abraham and his son”. Says the commentator Yusuf Ali. “It was a trial of the will of both. The son readily consented, and offered to stand true to his promise if his self-sacrifice was really required.” We agree here with the commenter.

We know that Abraham must have been fully convinced of having to do this too, and yet he knew that God's promises had to be fulfilled. He had days to think about it as they walked to the place of sacrifice.

Abraham had a high view of God and knew that God was absolutely holy and righteous.

a) He was tested to prove that his love for God was more than his love for his son.

b) He had to consider this command in the light of God's promise to give him as many descendants as the stars in the sky.

Abraham must have thought that there was only one way that Isaac could have children after he was dead. God must be able to raise him from the dead. Abraham had realised earlier that Isaac could only be born through the spirit of God. So this was his conclusion.

“By faith, Abraham considered that God was able to raise men from the dead, hence figuratively speaking, he did receive him (Isaac) back” (from the dead) (Heb.11: 17-19).

In the Quran (Sura 2:260), Abraham states that God can raise people from the dead.

What is so important in the sacrifice?

Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac when God provided a ram instead.

Abraham discounted the idea that faith was a bare surrender of the will of God. He had been promised to be the father of all nations. He knew that in reality, He would be and spiritually speaking, God is the father of all nations. God is faithful and trustworthy. Abraham saw that he was just a reflection of the true father in heaven, and an example of him. So also his son, his unusual birth, the sacrifice, the resurrection (physically Isaac was lifted off the sacrificial pile), and his descendants were just examples of a spiritual reality.

Abraham said to Isaac “God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son” (Gen 22:8)

God provided saying, “ because you have done this, and have not withheld your only son, I will indeed bless you, and will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven” (Gen 22:16-18).

Can we see a link here for our friends? Are there any verses in the bible to help us?

Abraham saw the whole of the Christian Gospel. God revealed to Abraham that he was to send his own Son Jesus Christ into the world, born of Abraham's seed as his greater son, so that the blessings he had promised to all nations might really happen through the saving death of his Son on the cross and subsequent resurrection to glory and honour at the right hand of God.

We must emphasis that: -

Jesus had no human father he was descended from Abraham through Sarah. God was the father of Jesus in an eternal sense. Spiritually speaking God is our Father too.

When Jesus was preaching he was challenged by the Jews and said

“Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day, he saw it and was glad.” (John 8:56)

Abraham knew that he was an example of what was to come.

God did not ask Abraham to sacrifice his son just to test his love for him, but to show him the extent of God's love in providing a way out for him. He pointed to the future when God was to send his own son into the world to become a sacrifice for everyone.

“For God so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

“This is how God showed his love for us he sent his one and only Son, into this world that we might live through him.” (1 Jn 4:9)

“He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?” (Rom 8:32)

“In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” (1 John 4:10)

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, by becoming a curse for us “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree” He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Holy Spirit.” (Gal 3:13-14)

Eid sacrifice

Once a year the Muslim world commemorates the deep love of Abraham for God in being willing to sacrifice even his own son. In many Muslim countries perfect animals are still sacrificed.

Every day the Christian world remembers the magnificent love of God for men, in being willing to sacrifice his own Son to prove once and for all His eternal Love for us, and desire for us to have eternal life with Him.

This offer is for the whole world. His love is for all who sin. They can become heirs of his grace.

Notes taken from: - The Christian View of The Eid sacrifice by John Gilchrist.